

Municipal Web Site Naming Guidelines

July 8, 2002

Dear City or Town Administrator:

As you know, municipalities have traditionally registered their official websites in the .US domain, while the .Gov domain was reserved for federal and state government. The U.S. General Services Administration recently announced that the .Gov domain would be available to local governmental units in the near future. This was particularly good news given recent developments that allow a .US domain name to be registered by non-governmental entities.

The GSA has issued suggested naming conventions for local governmental units, which include the city or town name as well as the state postal abbreviation. We strongly recommend that municipalities adopt this URL format as it will enhance the likelihood of approval by the GSA, formalize your preferred "brand", make it easier for your citizens and other users to remember and benefit from your website, as well as provide assurance to your citizens and other website visitors that yours is an official government website.

Many Massachusetts cities and towns have contacted us for guidance on registering the .Gov domain name and we are pleased that this development gives us the opportunity to offer sound advice. Please share the attached fact sheet with your technical staff. The fact sheet directs you to the GSA site and makes a number of recommendations regarding how to choose a naming convention. If you have any questions, please contact Kerry Conard, the Municipal Channel Manager for Mass.Gov by phone at (617) 626-4452 or by e-mail at kerry.conard@state.ma.us.

Very truly yours,

David I. Lewis
Chief Information Officer
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

.Gov Domain Name Fact Sheet

You can access information on the eligibility, availability and registration procedures of a .Gov domain name at <http://www.nic.gov>. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is not offering second level domain registration at this time. We strongly encourage you to register directly with the U.S. General Services Administration.

The GSA has issued suggested naming conventions for governmental units at the local level, which include the city or town name as well as the state postal abbreviation, e.g. www.auburn-ma.gov. Using the –ma will distinguish the Auburn, Massachusetts site from those of Auburn, Maine, Alabama, Washington or California.

For consistency, we are suggesting an additional guideline. Official city or town names should be used rather than informal or popular abbreviations, for instance, <http://www.marlborough-ma.gov>, rather than <http://www.marlboro-ma.gov>.

Even if your municipality is already using another URL or you have no website planned, we strongly urge that you reserve the URL convention appropriate to your city or town for future use. You should also consider reserving any variations as well, for example:

<http://www.northattleborough-ma.gov>
<http://www.northattleboro-ma.gov>
<http://www.nattleborough-ma.gov>
<http://www.nattleboro-ma.gov>

Given that a .US domain name may now be registered, not only by governmental units, but also by any U.S. resident, public service organization or business with a bona fide location in the United States, we strongly encourage you to reserve any .US domain names that might be relevant to your community, as well. Registering the .US domain names may allow you to prevent instances in which unauthorized sites falsely represent themselves as official websites of your city or town. For information on .US domain name registration, you can access <http://www.neustar.us>

.

If you have any questions, please contact Kerry Conard, the Municipal Channel Manager for Mass.Gov, by phone at (617) 626-4452 or by e-mail at kerry.conard@state.ma.us.